NORTH HALSTED STREET ~~CANAL~~ BRIDGE
Chicago Bridges Recording Project
Spanning North Branch Canal at North Halsted Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-160

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
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Jet Lowe, Photographer, summer 1999.

IL-160-1	LOOKING NE TOWARD CABRINI GREEN HOUSING PROJECT, NORTH HALSTED STREET AT RIGHT, WEST DIVISION STREET AT LEFT; GOOSE ISLAND AT BOTTOM OF FRAME.
IL-160-2	SOUTH LEAF PORTAL OF OVERHEAD, LOOKING NORTH.
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

NORTH HALSTED STREET BRIDGE

HAER No. IL-160

Location:	Spanning North Branch Canal at North Halsted Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. USGS Quad: Chicago Loop UTM: 16/446270/4638865
Date of Construction:	1908
Designer:	Alexander von Babo and Thomas G. Pihlfeldt, Department of Public Works, Chicago, Illinois
Fabricator:	Toledo Massillon Bridge Company, Toledo, Ohio
Builders:	Substructure: Fitz Simons and Connell Company, Chicago Illinois; superstructure: Jules E. Roemheld, Chicago, Illinois
Present Owner:	Chicago Department of Transportation, Chicago, Illinois
Present Use:	Highway bridge
Significance:	Spanning the North Branch Canal at North Halsted Street in Chicago, the North Halsted Street Bridge is a double-leaf, fixed-trunnion bascule with a rigidly attached, below-deck counterweight. Completed in 1908, the bridge embodies a design developed during 1899-1900 by the bridge division of the Chicago Department of Public Works, under the supervision of Chicago City Engineer John E. Ericson. The North Halsted Street Bridge was the eighth bascule of its type erected by the city. Its construction marked the end of the initial development period of the "Chicago Type Bascule." Subsequent bascules designed by the city introduced a number of technological refinements and displayed an aesthetic concern that was totally lacking in the North Halsted Street Bridge and its predecessors.
Historian:	Jeffrey A. Hess, August 1999.

Project Description:

The Chicago Bridges Recording Project was sponsored during the summer of 1999 by HABS/HAER under the general direction of E. Blaine Cliver, Chief; the City of Chicago, Richard M. Daley, Mayor; the Chicago Department of Transportation, Thomas R. Walker, Commissioner, and S.L. Kaderbek, Chief Engineer, Bureau of Bridges and Transit. The field work, measured drawings, historical reports and photographs were prepared under the direction of Eric N. DeLony, Chief of HAER.

Description[1]

Located about one-and-one-half miles northeast of Chicago's main downtown business district, the North Halsted Street Bridge carries highway and pedestrian traffic over the North Branch Canal, a narrow waterway that bypasses a bend in the North Branch of the Chicago River. Between the river on the west and the canal on the east lies Goose Island, a mile-long artifact of the canal's completion in the 1850s.[2] Viewed simply as an obstacle to highway traffic, the low-banked North Branch Canal presented few technological challenges to the mid nineteenth-century bridge engineer, who had several truss types at his disposal capable of spanning the waterway's 110-foot width. Social considerations, however, narrowed the choice of a suitable span.

When the Chicago Department of Public Works began planning the first North Halsted Street Bridge in the mid-1870s, municipal engineers needed to address the fact that the canal was a navigable waterway requiring a clear shipping channel of at least 60 feet. This criterion more or less necessitated the construction of a movable bridge, and the most practical type at the time was a truss-supported swing span, horizontally rotating on a center pier to permit the passage of vessels. Yet the city was not free to build the shortest, most economical swing span compatible with shipping requirements, for the crossing also had to satisfy the needs of overland travel within the larger context of the municipal highway system. North Halsted Street was a major artery in a street plan based on a cardinal-point grid. The canal, however, flowed in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction. To maintain the street's north-south alignment, the bridge would have to cross the canal on a diagonal, thereby increasing the length of the span. If the site had allowed for a simple fixed bridge, it would have been possible to build a skewed-truss structure that minimized the length of the crossing in relation to the canal banks. But skewed-truss designs were not readily adaptable for swing-span purposes. It was, therefore, necessary to make the North Halsted Street crossing even longer, so that the movable bridge would have right-angle, instead of skewed, abutments. As the result of these considerations, the North Halsted Street Bridge, as completed in 1877, contained a 226-foot-long swing span that rotated on a center pivot located by the canal's east bank. The entire eastern half of the bridge extended over the shore rather than the waterway.[3]

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, this description of site and structure is based on the author's field inspections conducted in July and August, 1999.

[2] Perry R. Duis and Glen E. Holt, "Chicago's Only Island," *Chicago History*, (February 1979): 170.

[3] The dates and dimensions of Chicago highway bridges constructed before 1950 can be found in City of Chicago, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, Division of Bridges, "Bridge History and Data," Drawing Nos. 16188-116192, 1943, rev. 1950, in Chicago Department of Transportation, Plan File Archives, 30 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter cited as CDT Plan Archives). For a site plan of the 1877 North Halsted Street Bridge, see G.A.M. Liljencrantz, *Atlas Containing Maps of Chicago River, Illinois, and Its Branches,*

Although the North Halsted Street Bridge had been designed to accommodate the largest river craft of its era, Great Lakes shipyards were soon producing vessels too large for its draw. The North Halsted Street crossing, however, was not the only obstacle to navigation in the Chicago River system. As a special city commission reported in 1899, "The lake vessels constructed during the last three or four years, and those that are now building, almost without exception . . . are absolutely precluded by their size from even entering the north branch of the river, and can only proceed to 12th Street on the south branch . . . These center pier [swing] bridges must be replaced. . . ."[4]

In 1900, the Department of Public Works began replacing its center-pier swing spans with an alternate movable-bridge type known as a "bascule." Vertically rotating a span, or leaf, around a fixed horizontal axis, a bascule operated much like a seesaw. Since the substructure of a bascule, unlike the center pier of a swing span, did not significantly intrude on the waterway, the new type left a greater portion of the channel open to navigation. Because of funding shortages, the city was forced to extend its bridge replacement program over several years. The first projects focused on dilapidated swing spans that posed a serious threat to highway traffic. Since the North Halsted Street crossing was structurally sound, it did not come up for replacement until 1905. Completed three years later, the new North Halsted Street Bridge was the eighth bascule built on the city's design.[5]

In the engineering literature, the city's new movable bridges came to be called "Chicago Type Bascules." The designation was more than a geographic label, for the bascules developed by the Chicago Department of Public Works embodied a distinctive engineering design that was adopted by other cities as well.[6] As exemplified by the North Halsted Street Bridge, a Chicago Type Bascule exhibited the following basic characteristics: two counterbalanced, truss-supported leaves rotating on fixed, horizontal, steel trunnions, or axles; counterweights rigidly attached to the rear of the trusses beneath the bridge's deck, or roadway level; and electric-powered operating machinery that opened and closed the leaves by means of a pinion-activated rack

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in 56th Cong., 1st Sess., House Document 95 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899, Sheet No. 1, North Branch Canal.

[4] Chicago City Council, Proceedings, 11 December 1899, 1915, in Government Documents Division, Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. See also G.A.M. Liljencrantz, "Obstructive Bridges and Docks in the Chicago River," *Journal of Western Society of Engineers* 3 (June 1898):1056-1084.

[5] On the development of the city's bascule design, see Thomas G. Pihlfeldt, "Designing," *Mayor's Annual Message and the Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Department of Public Works . . . Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1900* (Chicago: P.F. Pettibone and Co., 1901, 87-91. On the North Halsted Street Bridge, see *Mayor's Annual Message and the Thirtieth Report of the Department of Public Works . . . 1905* (Chicago: W.J. Harman Co., n.d.), 230. Hereafter, these reports will be cited as *DPW Annual Report*, with appropriate date and page.

[6] See, for example, C.B. McCullough and Phil A. Franklin, "Bascule Bridges," *Movable and Long-Span Steel Bridges*, ed. George A. Hool and W.S. Kinne (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1923), vol. I, 20.

incorporated into the rear of each truss.[7]

Measuring about 300 feet in length from the center of the abutments, the North Halsted Street Bridge consisted of two symmetrical halves, each containing a fixed, steel-girder approach section and a movable leaf supported by three riveted, 115-foot-long, steel trusses spaced on 21-foot centers. The eight-panel trusses were modified versions of a Pratt truss, the most common form of highway bridge built in the United States during the early twentieth century. The North Halsted Street trusses differed from the standard highway Pratt in the configuration of their tail ends. Instead of displaying inclined end posts at the shore portals, the tail ends of the trusses arced upward from the roadway in a bold curve. To supply rigidity to these tall rear members, the portals and next two panels incorporated overhead lateral bracing. The remaining forward panels, however, gradually decreased in depth, so that additional overhead bracing was unnecessary. The North Halsted Street Bridge, therefore, resembled an overhead truss near the shore and a pony truss over the waterway.

The fixed approach section at each end of the bridge was 60 feet in width. It carried a composite asphalt-wood roadway on a concrete slab supported by steel buckle plates between steel floor beams. The approach sidewalks were concrete, with steel mesh railings overlooking the river. The overall width of each movable leaf was also 60 feet, although the wood deck within its trusses was only 42-feet wide. The balance was made up by two nine-foot-wide metal brackets cantilevered from the bottom chords of the outside trusses. The brackets carried eight-foot-wide plank sidewalks, each flanking an 18-foot-wide roadway separated by the center truss. Each roadway carried streetcar tracks.

The substructure of each leaf was divided into two basic components: a solid abutment set back from the shore and a hollow pier extending slightly into the waterway. Both were stone-capped reinforced-concrete structures resting on wood piling. The leaf's superstructure was counterbalanced by a concrete and cast-iron counterweight enclosed in a riveted, steel-plate box rigidly attached to the three trusses at the tail end of their bottom chords. The counterweight arrangement placed the movable leaf's center of gravity near the center of the arc formed by the trusses' curved rear members. At the center of gravity, the bottom chords of each truss were rigidly connected to a transverse cast-steel trunnion, designed to serve as a rotating axle for lifting and lowering the movable leaf. As measured over the waterway, from leaf to leaf, the trunnions stood 206 feet apart. Bearings enclosed each end of the trunnions, and these fixtures rested on 40-foot-long, inverted, triangular, riveted, steel trusses that spanned the hollow portion of the pier. The trunnion trusses also carried built-up steel columns supporting, by means of transverse rolled I-beams, the front part of the bridge's fixed approach section. The approach section joined the movable-leaf roadway on the water side of the trunnions. The location of this joint was one of the bridge's significant design features. It ensured that highway traffic entered the movable leaf in front of the center of the gravity, so that there was no danger of the live load

[7] City of Chicago, Bureau of Engineering, Plans for North Halsted Street Bridge over the North Branch Chicago River, 1906-1907, Drawing Nos. 6657-6674; Toledo Massillon Bridge Company, Shop Drawings for North Halsted Street Bridge, 1907, Drawing Nos. 4448-4500, 4701-4728, in CTD Plan Archives. For description and photographs of original construction, see *DPW Annual Report,* 1908, 211-214.

opening the leaf.

Since the movable leaves were counterbalanced, relatively little power was required to open and close the bridge. For each leaf, the motive force took the form of two 40-horsepower, direct-current motors mounted, along with the rest of the lifting machinery, on a steel framework fixed to a concrete slab beneath the approach roadway, between the abutment and pier. This area, protected from the weather by wood siding, was known as the "machinery room." The motors turned two parallel horizontal shafts connected by a train of equalizing gears so as to operate as a unit. Operating through enclosed, oil-bathed worm gears and open bevel gears, the two shafts powered a single horizontal shaft that relied on open gearing to turn the final drive shaft. This last shaft carried three open pinions, each designed to engage an open cast-steel rack bolted to the curved tail end of one of the movable-leaf trusses.[8]

To raise the leaf, the drive chain powered the racks downward causing the trusses to rotate on their trunnions, thereby lifting the front of the leaf away from the waterway. As the tail ends of the trusses descended, they carried the counterweight downward into the hollow section of the pier. In fully open position, the bridge provided a clear channel of 90 feet. Closing the leaf was simply a matter of reversing the motors. Manually operated brakes connected to the drive train arrested the leaf's movement at each end of travel, bringing the tail ends of the three movable-leaf trusses to rest against bumper blocks attached to substructure steelwork.[9] In addition, the bridge was equipped with electric-powered, bolt-type center locks, which tied together the truss ends of the two movable leafs in order to ensure rigidity of the bascule span under live load. The center locks, brakes, and motors were all controlled from a wood-framed, gable-roofed operator's house standing adjacent to the fixed approach section on a steel cantilevered frame directly supported by the substructure. The north-leaf house stood on the west side of the bridge; the south-leaf house on the east side.

Neither of the original operator's houses survives. Both were reconstructed in 1916, and the replacement houses were themselves demolished in the mid-1990s, when the bridge was

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[8] The machinery layout copied the drive train of the North Western Avenue Bridge, a city-designed structure completed over the North Branch of the Chicago River in 1904. By inserting worm gears into the power-transmission chain, the city engineers hoped to prevent "any movement of the bridge due to wind, as pressure applied to the leaf and transmitted to the worm wheel cannot turn the worm, which thus holds the bridge positively in position." See "Trunnion Bascule Bridge at Northwestern [sic] Ave., Chicago," *Engineering News* 53 (19 January 1905): 64.

[9] The lower bumper blocks, made of wood, hung from the bottom rear of the trunnion-support trusses. At the end of the closing cycle, the tail end of the counterweight box pushed upward against these blocks, cushioning the contact of the leaf against the substructure. The upper bumper blocks were fashioned of rubber. Located slightly above and behind the lower bumpers, they were mounted on a bracket extending from the steelwork supporting the fixed approach section. At the end of the opening cycle, the upper bumpers absorbed the impact of metal bumpers riding on the curved tail ends of the bascules trusses.

removed from service as a movable span.[10] At that time, the front ends of the movable trusses were welded shut, and the fixed approach spans redecked. During the redecking, rubble was deposited in the machinery rooms rendering these spaces inaccessible for inspection. Although the drive trains remained in place, the debris rendered them permanently inoperable. The movable sections of the bridge were also redecked on several occasions. The most noticeable effect of this work was the total replacement of the original plank roadway by open steel gridding.[11] For the most part, rehabilitation efforts left the superstructure steelwork intact so that, despite the structure's conversion from a movable to a fixed span, the North Halsted Street Bridge still presents its original profile and much of its original detailing.

History

Between 1865 and 1890, the City of Chicago built 55 movable highway bridges over waterways within municipal limits. All were center-pier swing spans, the most popular type of movable bridge in the United States at the time.[12] Despite its ubiquity, the swing span was not universally admired. Its critics pointed to the fact that the center-pier design was becoming a navigational hazard for the ever-larger vessels of the late nineteenth century. They also noted that the swing span's requirement of a clear turning radius often prohibited the development of docking facilities adjacent to the bridge site. These shortcomings were especially onerous along highly industrialized urban waterways such as the Chicago River, where shipping channels tended to be narrow, highway crossings numerous, and real estate prices high.[13]

No matter how vociferously shipping and real estate interests might decry the center-pier swing span, there was no effective means of regulating movable-bridge design until the early 1890s, when Congress authorized the War Department to approve plans for all new bridges over

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[10] City of Chicago, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, Division of Bridges, "Proposed Repairs and Betterments for 1920 and Principle Repairs and Betterments Completed 1913-1919," Drawing No. 7152, 1919, in CDT Plan Archives. Although plans for the mid-1990s conversion were not located, a plan index file for the North Halsted Street Bridge in the Plan Archives lists several drawings that appear to be related to this work. Dated 1994, these drawings bear the following "file numbers": G-2 , G-3, G-4, S-1, S-2, S-3. S-4, S-5, S-6, S-7, S-7-A.

[11] Steel gridding was first installed on the North Halsted Street Bridge in the mid-1950s; see City of Chicago, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, Division of Bridges and Viaducts, "No. Halsted St. Bridge over North Branch Canal, General Plan Redecking and Details of Steel Supports for 5-inch Open Grid Floor," Drawing No. 18177, 1953, in CDT Plan Archives.

[12] The statistic does not include projects that relocated an old span to a new site. One bridge was built over the Calumet River; the remainder, over the various branches of the Chicago River. See City of Chicago, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, Division of Bridges, "Bridge History and Data," 1943, rev. 1950, Drawing Nos. 16188-16192, in CDT Plan Archives.

[13] Jeffrey A. Hess and Robert M. Frame III, *Historic Highway Bridges in Wisconsin. Volume 3. Movable Bridges*. (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1996), pt. 1, 10.

navigable waterways and to seek the alteration of any existing bridge that interfered with navigation.[14] In 1892, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers demonstrated both provisions of the law on the South Branch of the Chicago River, by ordering the removal of a recently completed swing span at Canal Street and by prohibiting the construction of a new swing span at South Halsted Street. As Chicago's Commissioner of Public Works observed in his annual report for 1892, "This Department found it necessary to look about and devise some plan that would meet these objections."[15] The result was a decade-long search by Chicago city engineers for a reliable, cost-effective, movable bridge that did not obstruct the shipping channel.

During the next three years, the city built three different types of movable bridges over the South Branch of the Chicago River: a double-leaf, folding-lift bridge at Canal Street (1893); a vertical-lift bridge at South Halsted Street (1894); and a double-leaf, rolling-lift bridge at West Van Buren Street (1895). Each embodied a newly patented design that operated on a different principle. The folding-lift bridge employed a counterweighted, segmented leaf, hinged at the rear and at the middle. When the operating machinery was set in motion, the leaf folded up like a jackknife, the rear segment pivoting upward and the front segment dropping downward. The vertical-lift bridge mimicked the action of a double hung-window, using tower-supported pulleys and cables to lift and lower a counterweighted horizontal span. The rolling-lift bridge, as its name implied, was subject to two types of movement. At the same time that the leaf rose vertically from the water, it also moved horizontally toward the shore. Resting on tracked, curved supports known as "segmental girders," the leaf rolled backwards and forwards like a rocking chair, thereby raising and lowering its front end. The folding-lift patent was controlled Shailer and Schniglau, a Chicago contracting firm; the vertical-lift patent, by engineer J.A.L. Waddell of Kansas City, Missouri; and the rolling-lift patent, by the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company of Chicago.[16]

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[14] W. M. Black, "Bridges Over Navigable Waters of the United States," *Engineering News* 29 (13 April 1893): 341-342.

[15] *Mayor's Annual Message and Seventeenth Annual Report of the Department of Public Works . . . Fiscal Year Ending Dec. 31st 1892* (n.p., n.d.), 10, 57-58.

[16] Anticipating the federal government's objections to the swing span, the city had begun searching for an alternative design before the Corps of Engineers' official prohibition. In 1890, the Department of Public Works contracted with Shailer and Schniglau to build a folding-lift bridge over the North Branch Canal at Weed Street. Completed in 1891, this structure was plagued by mechanical problems. The 1892 Canal Street Bridge was supposed to be an improved version, but it, too, failed to give satisfaction. Its mechanical system was completely rebuilt in 1897. The Weed Street Bridge was so poorly designed that it was permanently closed in 1899. Although the folding-lift patent was controlled by Shailer and Schniglau, the inventor and original patent holder was William Harmon of Chicago. See *DPW Annual Report, 1890*, 160, 162, 165; "A Folding-Floor Drawbridge," *Engineering News* 25 (23 May 1891): 486-487; *DPW Annual Report, 1897*, 124; City Council, Proceedings, 18 September 1899, 1060; William Harmon, U.S. Patent No. 383,880, 5 June 1888. From the very beginning, the Department of Public Works had misgivings about Waddell's vertical-lift bridge. As one municipal engineer commented during the bridge's construction, "The whole work is an expensive experiment." Largely because of the South Halsted Street Bridge's reputation for "heavy first cost and maintenance, and expensive operation," it took Waddell over a decade

As might be expected with new inventions, all three bridges experienced mechanical difficulties during their first years of operation, but the rolling-lift design seemed to be the most promising of the lot. Incorporating the fewest movable parts, it appeared to be the simplest to build and the cheapest to maintain. In 1895, the Chicago Department of Public Works contracted for the construction of a second rolling-lift bridge, which was completed over the North Branch of the Chicago River at North Halsted Street in 1897. It soon became apparent, however, that there were structural as well as mechanical problems with the new rolling-lift design. In 1898, City Engineer John E. Ericson observed that the concrete foundations of the new North Halsted Street Bridge needed to be strengthened. A year later, he reported that the bridge's substructure was literally "falling to pieces."[17] The problem was that the rolling-lift design was best suited for sites with easily accessible bedrock to support bridge foundations, a geological condition that did not exist along the Chicago River. As a Chicago municipal staff engineer explained:

> These [rolling-lift] bridges, although marked improvements over the folding and [vertical] lift bridges, have some objections. The main objection lies in the fact that this type of bridge requires a most solid foundation, as the whole load in opening and closing travels horizontally over a space of from twenty to thirty feet on the substructure. The points of application of this load during operation of the bridge change continuously, and, in connection with the wind pressure, have a very severe action on the foundation, which, if not built of extraordinarily large dimensions, and consequently at great expense, or on solid rock, shows a wagging motion, as the Halsted street bridge over the North branch of the river sufficiently proves.[18]

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to secure his next vertical-lift commission. In Chicago itself, a second vertical-lift highway bridge was not constructed until 1938, at Torrence Avenue over the Calumet River. See City Council, Proceedings, 29 May 1893, 334; J.A.L. Waddell, "The Halsted Street Lift-Bridge," *American Society of Civil Engineers Transactions*, Paper No. 742 (1895):1-16; C.C. Schneider, "Movable Bridges," *American Society of Civil Engineers Transactions*, Paper 1071 (1908):268-269; Hess and Frame, 13-15; Waddell, U.S. Patent No. 506,571, 10 October 1893. The rolling-lift bridge at West Van Buren Street was constructed simultaneously with an adjacent Scherzer bridge commissioned by the West Side Metropolitan Elevated Railroad Company. The design was the creation of William Scherzer, a Chicago-based, Swiss-trained engineer who was familiar with French attempts to develop a wheel-mounted bascule earlier in the century. Scherzer filed a patent application for his invention, but died a few months before its approval in 1893. The patent became the property of his brother Albert, who organized the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company to sell rights to the design. See "Van Buren Street Rolling Lift Bridge," *Engineering Record* 31 (16 February, 2 March 1895):204-206, 242-243; "The Van Buren Street Rolling Lift Bridge, Chicago," *Engineering News* 32 (21 February 1895):114-115; Hess and Frame, 21-22; William Scherzer, U.S. Patent No. 511,713, 26 December 1893. For general overviews of the city's movable-bridge projects during the 1890s, see *DPW Annual Report, 1900*, 87-88; Becker, 266-270.

[17] *DPW Annual Report, 1894*, 23-24; *DPW Annual Report, 1895, 50; DPW Annual Report, 1896*, 104, 110; City Council, Proceedings, 12 September, 1898, 587; 18 September 1899, 1060.

[18] *DPW Annual Report, 1900*, 88.

Disenchanted with the patented designs available on the market, City Engineer Ericson in 1898 recommended that "the city take up the question of investigating movable bridges for the purpose of designing their own bridges."[19] At the time, the city's finances were in an extremely embarrassed condition. Because of state-mandated restrictions on municipal taxing and bonding powers, the city lacked funds to pay for even basic bridge maintenance, let alone elaborate new design studies.[20] Ericson, therefore, decided on a simple paper investigation by in-house staff. His goal was "a critical analysis of the literature on movable bridges built in the United States and Europe, with the view of selecting a type of bridge suitable to the requirements of the Chicago river and its branches." By 1899, Ericson and his colleagues had decided that the most appropriate model for Chicago was the 1894 Tower Bridge of London, England.

Like the folding-lift and rolling-lift bridges built in Chicago, the Tower Bridge belonged to a class of engineering structures known as a "bascules, after the French word for "seesaw." Unlike a swing bridge, which horizontally rotated around a vertical axis, a bascule vertically rotated around a horizontal axis. Some bascules, as in the case of the medieval castle drawbridge, rotated around a stationary horizontal axis; others, such as the Scherzer rolling-lift bridge, had a moving axis. The Tower Bridge was of the stationary type; its horizontal axis was defined by a steel pivot, or trunnion, and it was according called a fixed-trunnion bascule. Its design incorporated two movable sections, or leaves, each counterweighted at the rear so that the leaf's center of gravity was at the trunnion. Located below deck level in the abutments, steam-powered machinery operated the draw by means of a pinion engaging a curved rack mounted at the rear end of the leaf. As the front end of the leaf tilted upward, the counterweighted rear end descended into a masonry pit built into the abutment. When the power was reversed, the leaf pivoted into closed position.[21]

The counterbalanced-lever principal of the Tower Bridge was appealing to Ericson for three main reasons. First, it relied on relatively simple operating machinery that was fairly easy to manufacture and install. Second, it was patent-free, so that its use entailed no royalty payments. Third, it dictated a bridge with a fixed center of gravity, so that the action of the movable leaves would not alter the distribution of stresses on the bridge's substructure. With his technological quest at an end, Ericson supervised the preparation of "three complete designs . . . differing in appearance, method of mounting, etc., but all involving the main feature, that of revolving on a fixed trunnion."[22] Except for minor departures, such as the substitution of

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[19] "Testimony of John Ericson," *The Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company vs. City of Chicago and Great Lakes Dock Company*, 6, U..S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit, Records and Briefs, October 1924, Case No. 3606, in Record Group 276, National Archives, Chicago.

[20] *DPW Annual Report, 1899*, 68; *DPW Annual Report, 1901*, 5-10.

[21] "Testimony of Thomas G. Pihlfeldt," *Scherzer vs. Chicago*, 93. Pihlfeldt identified the Tower Bridge as the model in Dan Fogle, "Modest Man is Pihlfeldt," *Chicago Daily New*, 15 October 1936, 21. For a description of the Tower Bridge, see Ottis Ellis Hovey, *Movable Bridges* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1926), vol 1, 83-88.

[22] *DPW Annual Report, 1900*, 88.

electric power for steam power, these designs incorporated the basic features of the Tower Bridge. Ericson submitted his drawings to an outside panel of mechanical and civil engineers, who approved the basic fixed-trunnion concept but suggested certain improvements regarding the substructure, flooring system, and operating equipment.

Beginning with the municipal appropriation ordinance of 1900, the City Council cobbled together sufficient funds to allow Ericson to replace five severely deteriorated swing spans with new fixed-trunnion, double-leaf bascules based on in-house designs. The new structures were completed at Clybourn Place (later renamed Cortland Street) over the North Branch of the Chicago River (1902); at Division Street over the North Branch Canal (1903); at Ninety-Fifth Street over the Calumet River (1903); at Division Street over the North Branch (1904); and at North Western Avenue over the North Branch (1904). In terms of general appearance, these bridges established the basic profile of the early "ChicagoType Bascule," as the genre came to be known in the engineering literature.[23] The movable leaves were supported by three evenly spaced, riveted, steel trusses displaying a distinctive, overhead-braced, humpbacked configuration at the shore portals. The bulbous outline of the rear members was dictated by the curvature of the externally mounted operating racks, the only part of the lift machinery visible above roadway level. Apart from the occasional use of decorative portal plates, the city engineers made little attempt to mitigate the bridges' ungainly appearance through architectural detailing.[24]

Although Ericson had rejected the Scherzer rolling-lift design, the Department of Public Works was not the only builder of movable highway bridges in Chicago. In 1889, the state legislature had chartered an independent government agency, the Sanitary District of Chicago, and had given it wide powers over the Chicago River.[25] The Sanitary District's primary responsibility was to reduce the pollution of the waterway, which had long been used for disposing sewage and refuse. As dictated by the region's natural hydraulic patterns, the Chicago River system sluggishly drained into Lake Michigan, just north of the downtown commercial neighborhood. The Sanitary District intended to alter this state of affairs by constructing a canal to drain the waterway away from the city, southward into the Desplaines River, a tributary of the Illinois River, which, in turn, emptied into the Mississippi River. The Chicago River would become an outlet of Lake Michigan, which, instead of receiving the city's pollution, would help flush it, in somewhat diluted form, into the Mississippi.[26]

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[23] See, for example, C.B. McCullough and Phil A. Franklin, "Bascule Bridges," *Movable and Long-Span Steel Bridges*, ed. George A. Hool and W.S. Kinne (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1923), vol. I, 20.

[24] City Council, Proceedings, 4 April 1900, 2817; *DPW Annual Report, 1901*, 5-10; *DPW Annual Report, 1904*, 16-17.

[25] "History of the Sanitary District of Chicago and the Drainage Problem, with the Law Relating to the Same," in *DPW Annual Report, 1889*, 67-93.

[26] On the construction of the new canal and related features, see Mary Yeater Rathbun, *Architectural and Engineering Resources of the Illinois Waterway between 130th Street in Chicago and La Grange, Illinois*

To accommodate the Chicago Rivers's increased flow, the Sanitary District also intended to widen the waterway at several points, which required the replacement of several municipal highway bridges. In 1898, while the drainage canal was still under construction, the Sanitary District embarked on the reconstruction of the Taylor Street Bridge over the South Branch of the Chicago River, with the understanding that the city would maintain and operate the structure after its completion. Following the example set by the Department of Public Works in the construction of the West Van Buren and North Halsted street bridges, the Sanitary District selected the Scherzer rolling-lift design for its project.[27] A year later, in 1899, the agency decided that its engineering program also required the replacement of the six-year-old, folding-lift bridge at Canal Street. By this time, however, Ericson had deep misgivings about the way the Scherzer Company designed its bridges, and he secured the Sanitary District's consent to consult on design selection. Since the Scherzer rolling-lift bridge still seemed to be the most efficient and economical alternative to the center-pier swing span, the Scherzer company secured the Canal Street contract as well, but Ericson attempted to force the company to strengthen its foundation design. The outcome apparently was to no one's satisfaction. The Sanitary District and the Scherzer Company resented Ericson's meddling, and Ericson developed a firm dislike for the Scherzer Company's business practices.[28]

If Chicago municipal finances had been in a healthier condition at the turn of the century, Ericson might have had greater leverage with the Scherzer Company. But the city could not afford to take over the construction of the Sanitary District's highway bridges. Indeed, the city

(Carbondale, IL: American Resources Group, Ltd for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, Rock Island, IL, 1996), 46-60.

[27] Board of Trustees of the Sanitary District of Chicago, *Proceedings, 1898,* 23 November 1898, 5275-5276; *Proceedings, 1900,* 3 December 1900, 6882. Henceforth, these board minutes will be cited as *SDC Proceedings*, with appropriate date and page.

[28] *SDC Proceedings*, 30 August 1899, 6016; 21 February 1900, 6307-6308; 24 October 1900; 3 December 1900, 6882. Ericson and the Sanitary District initially considered using another rolling-lift design invented and patented by Milwaukee engineer Max G. Schinke. In the Schinke bascule, a counterbalanced leaf was supported by a pivoted swinging arm at the front end while attached to rollers set in a curved stationary track at the rear end. The bridge was set in motion by a simple strut connected to a power source. When the strut pulled back on the span, the front end of the leaf arced upwards, while the rear end rolled downwards along the curved track. Because of the track's shape, the leaf's center of gravity retreated and advanced in a horizontal line, thereby maintaining a counterbalanced system. Between 1895 and 1897, the City of Milwaukee built two Schinke bascules. Although the bridges appear to have functioned fairly well, their curved tracks were expensive to fabricate and difficult to install. Chicago never built a Schinke rolling- lift bridge,and Milwaukee itself abandoned the design after adopting, in 1900, fixed-trunnion bascule bridges that were similar in several respects to the design developed by Ericson. The Milwaukee bascule differed from the Chicago type primarily in its use of plate girders, instead of trusses, for the leaves and in its location of the operating racks, which were mounted on the bottom of the plate girders, just behind the trunnions. See Hess and Frame, 26-29, 36-50; Max G. Schinke, U.S. Patent No. 517,808, 3 April 1894; No. 551,004, 10 December 1895; "Sixteenth Street Bascule Bridge, Milwaukee," *Engineering Record* 31 (9 March 1895):256-257; M.G. Schinke, "The New Huron Street Lift Bridge, Milwaukee, Wis.," *Engineering News* 37 (22 April 1897):253-255.

could not afford even to replace some of its own most hazardous crossings. In the spring of 1900, Chicago Mayor Harrison H. Carter appealed to the better-funded Sanitary District to assist the city in replacing its deteriorating and obstructive swing spans. As the mayor pointed out, the Sanitary District was responsible for maintaining the flowage rate of the Chicago River at certain legislatively set limits in order to keep the waterway free from sewage build up. Since the center-pier swing spans impeded the river's flow, the Sanitary District, so the mayor reasoned, had an obligation to replace the structures. Although this argument might not have stood up in a court of law, the Sanitary District had its own legal reasons for acceding to the mayor's wishes. A few months earlier, the district's drainage canal had gone into service, with an unexpected consequence. Not only did the canal reverse and increase the flow of the Chicago River, but it also made navigation on the waterway more difficult, especially in the vicinity of center-pier bridges. Fearful that it might be held liable for shipping accidents associated with the more swiftly flowing waterway, the Sanitary District agreed to begin the replacement of certain center-pier bridges. For its part, the city agreed to eventually repay a portion of the construction costs and to assume responsibility for maintaining and operating the new spans. Unlike the Canal Street Bridge project, however, the Department of Public Works was to have no say in the bridge-selection process. Instead, the Sanitary District was to be completely in charge of design and construction, subject only to the federally mandated review of bridge plans by the Corps of Engineers.[29] Under this arrangement, the Sanitary District built a total of eight movable highway bridges. Seven were Scherzer rolling lifts.[30] The eighth was based on an untried bascule design that had been developed by John W. Page, formerly a staff engineer with the Sanitary District.[31]

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[29] *SDC Proceedings*, 11 April, 16 May 1900, 6410-6411, 6556 ; City Council, Proceedings, 16 July 1900, 6718-6719. For the Sanitary District's concern over its potential legal liabilities, see *SDC Proceedings*, 21 March, 4, 11 April, 11 July, 1900, 6355-6356, 6386-6387, 6394-6395, 6411, 6642-6643.

[30] The Scherzer bridges were built over the main river at State Street (1903) and Dearborn Street (1905); and over the south branch at Throop Street (1903), Loomis Street (1904), Harrison Street (1905), Eighteenth Street (1905), and Cermak Road (1906).

[31] *SDC Proceedings*, 20 June 1900, 6648-6649; "The [South] Ashland Avenue Bascule Bridge, Chicago," *Engineering Record* 43 (27 April 1901):3392-394; "Page Bascule over the [West Fork of the South Branch of] the Chicago River at [South] Ashland Ave.," *Engineering News* 45 (25 April 1901):311-312; J. B. Strauss, "The Bascule Bridge in Chicago," *A Half Century of Chicago Building*, ed. John H. Jones and Fred A. Britten (Chicago, 1910), 92. Page's goal was to eliminate the deep counterweight pits required by the Scherzer rolling-lift bridge. Like the bascule developed by the city's engineering staff, the original Page design for South Ashland Avenue was a counterweighted, double-leaf structure pivoting on fixed trunnions in the lower chords of the bascule trusses. The two designs, however, had completely different detailing and operating principles. In the Page bascule, there were two types of counterweights: (1) overhead cast-iron blocks rigidly suspended from the top chord of the bascule trusses, and (2) movable steel struts pivoted at one end to the fixed approach section and at the other end to heavy, steel, transverse girders supported by rollers resting on the tops chords of the bascule trusses. The transverse girders carried an electric-powered drive chain containing pinions that meshed with curved racks mounted on the top chords of the bascule trusses. During the bridge's opening cycle, the pinion-and-rack arrangement caused the

In 1904, the City Council of Chicago finally gained the legal authority to increase the level of municipal indebtedness and to float a bond issue for public improvements. The Department of Public Works immediately began planning for the construction of several movable bridges.[32] The design of these projects was to be the responsibility of Thomas G. Pihlfeldt, a Norwegian-born, German-trained engineer who, after entering the municipal bridge division in 1894, had become "Structural Iron Designer in Charge" in 1901. Pihlfeldt's "Assistant Designer" was Alexander von Babo. Like Pihlfeldt himself, von Babo had helped Ericson develop the city's fixed-trunnion bascule design.[33] By December 1904, Pihlfeldt and von Babo had prepared a set of plans for the first of the bond-funded bridges, which would serve as a replacement for the severely deteriorated, center-pier, swing span built in 1877 over the North Branch of the Chicago River at North Avenue. The bridge's fixed-trunnion, double-leaf, bascule superstructure closely copied the engineering of the 1904 West Division Street Bridge, while its substructure and operating machinery followed the layout of the 1904 North Western Avenue Bridge.[34]

Although the city engineers seem to have had every intention of using their own design, the Commissioner of Public Works, F.W. Blocki, motivated apparently by legal reasons,

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transverse girders to roll slightly forward and the bascule trusses to pivot open on their trunnions. The curvature of the racks was calculated to compensate for the movement of the transverse girders, so that the bridge's center of gravity at all times remained at the fixed trunnions. Shortly after the Sanitary District accepted this bascule design, Page developed a simplified deck-truss version that completely eliminated the rolling segment of the counterweight. In this version, as completed at South Ashland Avenue in 1902, the bridge's approach spans functioned as counterweights pivoting in the abutments. The river ends of the spans rested on rollers that engaged curved tracks in the tail ends of the bascule deck trusses. As in the original design, the tracks' curvature maintained the center of gravity at the trunnions. See "The [South] Ashland Avenue Bascule Bridge, Chicago," *Engineering Record* 48 (10 October 1903):434-436. Although the South Ashland Avenue Bridge appears to have given satisfactory service until its replacement in 1936, neither the Sanitary District nor the city constructed another Page bascule. The Chicago and Alton Railroad, however, did build a second Page bascule for its own use in 1906, over the South Fork of the South Branch of the Chicago River near Archer Avenue.

[32] *DPW Annual Report, 1904*, 16-17.

[33] *DPW Annual Report, 1901*, 101; "The Chicago Type Bascule Bridge," *Engineering Record* 42 (21 July 1900):50. There is little biographical information available on von Babo. He remained a bridge engineer with the city until 1915. On Pihlfeldt, see "Pihlfeldt Dies at 82; Designed 50 Bridges for City in 51 Years," *Chicago Daily News*, 23 January 1941, 14; Kenneth Bjork, *Saga in Steel and Concrete* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1947), 121-126.

[34] City of Chicago, Bureau of Engineering, Plans for North Avenue Bridge over the North Branch Chicago River, 1904, Drawing Nos. 6690-6710, in CDT Plan Archives. In 1899, Ericson had described the North Avenue Bridge as " likely to be closed any time" in view of the fact that "the wooden member is rapidly rotting away, iron work badly rusted and center pier shaky and rotten"; see City Council, Proceedings, 18 September 1899, 1060. On the West Division Street Bridge and North Western Avenue Bridge, see "The Division Street Bascule Bridge, Chicago," *Engineering Record* 42 (20 August 1904):215-217; "Trunnion Bascule Bridge at Northwestern [sic] Ave., Chicago," 64-65.

informed the Scherzer Company that "the City of Chicago has no objection to advertising for proposals for the building of a bascule bridge of the Scherzer type at North [A]venue; provided plans for such proposals are made to conform in every respect with all the requirements of the city's specifications for such a bridge."[35] In February 1905, Ericson sent the Scherzer Company the North Avenue Bridge specifications, which contained provisions concerning substructure and counterweight design that would have required the company to alter its standard treatment of these features. John W. Page, the inventor of the bascule type built by the Sanitary District at South Ashland Avenue in 1902, also received the city's specifications, and he duly submitted a design. In March 1905, the city ruled that Page's design was not in compliance and therefore should not be considered by potential bidders on the North Avenue Bridge project.[36] The Scherzer Company took a different tack. Instead of presenting a preliminary design for city approval, it waited until the bidding deadline and then submitted two proposals, both of which ignored the objectionable provisions in the city's specifications. One proposal, in the amount of $160,000, offered "an artistic deck Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge with arched outline (similar to the Scherzer. . . Bridge [built for the Sanitary District in 1905] across the Chicago River at State Street)." The other, in the amount of $150,000, was for "a through Scherzer rolling lift bridge (similar in outline to the 'Ericson Trunnion Bridge' of which plans prepared by the city are on file)."[37] When the Department of Public Works opened the North Avenue Bridge bids on 31 March 1905, it rejected both Scherzer proposals for noncompliance. Contracts totaling $193,352 were then awarded to low-bidding firms that had adopted the city's fixed-trunnion bascule design. The Scherzer Company, filing on behalf of itself and the taxpayers of Chicago,

[35] F.W. Blocki to Frank Montgomery and Co., 22 December 1904, in "Bill for Injunction, Exhibit A, filed 31 March 1905, *Albert H. Scherzer v. City of Chicago et. al*, Case File No. 243,514, Superior Court, Cook County, Illinois, in Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, Archives, Daley Center, Chicago, IL. Frank M. Montgomery and Company served as Scherzer's engineering and construction company in Chicago.

[36] The Scherzer Company was notified of Page's disqualification in a letter from Ericson dated 18 March 1905; see"Bill for Injunction," Exhibit B, *Scherzer v. City of Chicago*.

[37] Frank M. Montgomery and Co. to F.W. Blocki, 31 March 1905, in "Supplemental Bill," Exhibit C, filed 11 April 1905, *Scherzer v. City of Chicago*. The Scherzer Company appears to have hoped that its "artistic" bascule design would rally public support in its favor. In 1900, the newly established Municipal Art League of Chicago, which counted among its members such influential architects as Louis Sullivan and Martin Roche, had tried to persuade the Sanitary District to improve the aesthetic quality of the bascules it was building for the city. The league particularly wanted a "monumental" treatment for the prominently sited State Street Bridge. The Sanitary District was initially receptive to the league's design suggestions, but it failed to act on them. In 1903, the league abandoned its efforts, noting that it had failed "to have any influence in the design of the new bridges across the Chicago River." Its president, Franklin MacVeah, declared, "A Chicago bridge is a depressing sight . . . It is a marvel that suicides from these bridges are so infrequent." Although Scherzer's design for the State Street Bridge failed to meet the league's aesthetic standards, its arched treatment of the structure was the first attempt in Chicago to beautify a movable bridge. See Municipal Art League of Chicago, *Year Book, Twentieth Century, Year One* (n.p., 1901), 5-6; *Year Book, Twentieth Century, Year Three* (n.p., 1903), 13; *Year Book, Twentieth Century, Year Four* (n.p., 1904), 10.

immediately obtained an injunction from the Superior Court of Cook County to stop the letting of the contracts, on the grounds that the Department of Public Works had "maliciously, fraudulently, and unlawfully" prohibited the company from providing Chicago with "a superior type of bridge . . . at a great saving in cost."[38]

In July 1905, the city administration took steps that seem to have been at least partly aimed at placating the Scherzer Company. A newly installed commissioner of public works removed the bridge division from Ericson's bailiwick and transformed it into a separate administrative entity under Pihlfeldt's supervision. Henceforth, Pihlfeldt was to be "more or less independent of the City Engineer [i.e., Ericson,]" who would exercise "only a general supervision over the [bridge] work."[39] The Scherzer Company also received what it thought were assurances that the city would amend its bridge specifications to permit competitive bidding on the Scherzer rolling-lift design. In August, the company dropped its suit against the city, and the court dissolved the injunction prohibiting the letting of contracts for the North Avenue Bridge, which was completed two years later.[40]

In the fall of 1905, the Department of Public Works began planning its next movable-bridge project, scheduled for the North Branch of the Chicago River at Indiana Street. By this time, still another independent movable-bridge designer was seeking to break into the Chicago market. Chicago engineer Joseph B. Strauss had spent several years developing a fixed-trunnion bascule with a movable rear counterweight suspended in a pivoted parallelogram framework. As the leaf rotated up and down on its fixed trunnion, the parallelogram linkage swung the counterweight through a series of parallel positions, at all times concentrating the weight on the very end of the leaf. Because the parallelogram linkage maximized the leverage of the counterbalancing system, Strauss' design made it possible to shorten the rear of the leaf, thereby saving on both material and space. With his first bascule under construction in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1905, Strauss, like the Scherzer Company, clamored for contracts in his home city.[41] In December 1905, the Department of Public Works informed both Strauss and Scherzer that it

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[38] Scherzer, "Supplemental Bill," 3; Scherzer, "Bill for Injunction," 7.

[39] On the reorganization, see *DPW Annual Report, 1905*, 149; William L. O'Connell and Thomas G. Pihlfeldt, "Joint and Several Answer of the Defendants," 11 February 1907, in *Albert H. Scherzer v. City of Chicago et. al*, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, Case File No. 277,091, in Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, Archives, Daley Center, Chicago, Illinois; *DPW Annual Report, 1907*, 24.

[40] *DPW Annual Report, 1906*, 284; *DPW Annual Report, 1907*, 9.

[41] Strauss eventually received patents for a number of bascule designs employing the parallelogram linkage; he assigned these to the Strauss Bascule Bridge Company, founded in 1902. See "Bascule Bridges," *Engineer* 115 (28 March 1913):340-343; Paul T. Gilbert, *Chicago and Its Makers* (Chicago: Felix Mendelsohn, 1929), 875. Strauss' first two projects are described in "The Strauss Trunnion Bascule Bridge Near Rahway, N.J.," *Engineering Record* 55 (13 April 1907):465-467.

would consider their designs for the Indiana Street crossing.[42]

The key issue, however, was whether Pihlfeldt would prepare specifications that, in fact, gave outside designers a competitive chance to have their proposals accepted. As it turned out, the Indiana Street bridge would not provide a test case, for the city postponed the project. But plans did go forward to replace a 30-year-old swing span at North Halsted Street over the North Branch Canal. In July 1906, the Scherzer Company requested and received the city's specifications for this project. Although the company still found a few provisions to be objectionable, it decided that the specifications as a whole were acceptable and began preparing a proposal for the new bridge. In November, however, Pihlfeldt circulated a new set of specifications based on the city's fixed-trunnion bascule built at North Western Avenue in 1903. These specifications were as difficult for the Scherzer Company to adopt as those previously issued for the North Avenue Bridge, which was, itself, partly modeled on the North Western Avenue bascule. Once again the Scherzer Company submitted a full design-and-construction proposal that ignored the issues in contention, and once again the Department of Public Works discarded their entry. In late December, Pihlfeldt awarded the North Halsted Street construction contracts to bidders who had based their submittals on the city's fixed-trunnion bascule design. Fitz Simons and Connell Company received the substructure contract in the amount of $98,218, and Jules E. Roemheld was awarded the superstructure contract for $159,240.[43] The total amount was almost $50,000 more than the Scherzer Company's proposal for the entire bridge. The Scherzer Company immediately filed another lawsuit against the city, naming Pilhlfeldt and Commissioner of Public Works William L. O'Connell as defendants.[44]

Seeking both an injunction to halt the North Halsted Street Bridge project and

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[42] As Strauss reported, "The City of Chicago is now adopting this policy [of throwing open the design of movable bridges to public competition] and has invited various specialists in this class of work to place their designs on file for the proposed new Indiana Street bridge. On these plans the city will then receive bids and award the contract to the lowest bidder"; Strauss to R.R. McCormick, President Sanitary District, 11 December 1905, in *SDC Proceedings*, 20 December 1905. Strauss was writing to the Sanitary District to encourage its board to adopt the city's policy and consider movable-bridge designs other than those of the Scherzer Company, which had pretty much monopolized the Sanitary District's business in this area.

[43] Fitz Simons and Connell was a well-established Chicago contracting firm that had worked on numerous substructure projects for the Department of Public Works since the mid-1880s. Jules E. Roemheld was a relative newcomer to the Chicago contracting scene. His credentials, however, included a stint as the city's chief bridge engineer from 1896 to 1898. Prior to the North Halsted Street Bridge, he had secured the superstructure contracts for five of the fixed-trunnion bascules built by the city. See City of Chicago, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, Division of Bridges, "Bridge History and Data," Drawing Nos. 16188-16192, 1943, rev. 1950, in CDT Plan Archives; John William Leonard, *Who's Who in Engineering, 1922-1923* (New York: John W. Leonard Corporation, 1922), 1073.

[44] Both the city and the Scherzer Company were in general agreement about the events leading up to the lawsuit, as described above; see Albert H. Scherzer, "Amended and Supplemental Bill of Complaint," 9 February 1907; William L. O'Connell and Thomas G. Pihlfeldt, "The Joint and Several Answer of the Defendants," 11 February 1907, in *Scherzer v. City of Chicago,* Circuit Court of Cook County, Case File No. 277,091.

compensatory damages for being excluded from the bidding, the Scherzer Company laid three major allegations before the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. First, after noting that over 100 Scherzer rolling-lift bascules had been built in various parts of the world, including Chicago, the company averred that "these bridges have every advantage in permanency, structural strength, convenience and economy over. . . any other bascule bridge." Second, the Scherzer Company asserted that Chicago City Engineer John Ericson was associated with a private engineering firm promoting the construction of "Ericson-trunnion bridges" and that every bridge of this design built by the city was simply so much advertizing for Ericson's business. Third, it contended that the city's chief bridge designer, Pihlfeldt, was "influenced or controlled in his actions with regard to the selection of bridges by the said John Ericson, and that the said Pihlfeldt is endeavoring to have the City of Chicago construct Ericson-trunnion bridges for the purpose of assisting said John Ericson in his private business even if the City of Chicago and the taxpayers thereof are required to pay from $50,000 to $100,000 more for each Ericson-trunnion bridge than they would be obliged to pay for a better bridge of the Scherzer design."[45]

In responding to the Scherzer Company's accusations, defendants O'Connell and Pihlfeldt did not deny that Ericson had a private engineering practice, but they did take issue with the allegation that Ericson's business interests influenced their selection of the fixed-trunnion bascule design for the North Halsted Street crossing.[46] Pihlfeldt also vehemently disputed the Scherzer Company's claim of supremacy for its rolling-lift bridge, taking the unprecedented step of turning the bridge division's annual report for 1906 into an illustrated catalog of maintenance problems experienced by the city while operating its Scherzer bridges. Authored by Pihlfeldt's chief assistant, von Babo, this critique bypassed the city's customary complaint concerning the substructure weakness of the Scherzer design and concentrated on another structural problem that appeared to be even more damning.[47] The defining feature of a Scherzer bridge was that the bascule superstructure rolled backwards and forwards on curved steel girders supported by horizontal steel tracks. According to von Babo, this rolling action created such enormous contact pressures that both the "[curved] segment and track-girders of these bridges deteriorate amazingly fast." As an example, von Babo presented photographs of severe track deformation in the city rolling-lift bridge at Taylor Street. And to indicate that such deterioration was not simply the result of the city's poor maintenance practices or faulty operating procedures, he also included photographs of the same condition in a Chicago railroad bridge designed by the Scherzer Company. The photographs, von Babo asserted, "show plainly that the above remarks are not theoretical quibbles, but are based on actual facts." Although von Babo did concede that

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[45] Scherzer, "Amended and Supplemental Bill of Complaint," 12-14.

[46] O'Connell and Pihlfeldt, "Joint and Several Answers." Ericson did private engineering consulting as part of the firm of Ericson and Borg. There is no record that he received contracts from the City of Chicago. During the Halsted Street Bridge dispute, the firm was attempting to secure a bascule bridge contract in Michigan City, Indiana.

[47] *DPW Annual Report, 1906*, 269-284.

the Scherzer Company's bridges were cheaper than those built according to the city's design, he argued that these "savings" were made at the expense of quality:

> Savings made and claimed for rolling lift bridge designers have nothing to do with the system or type of bridges, but are the result of the efforts on the part of the owners of the patents to keep the original cost down to a minimum. Just as any other public improvement, for instance a schoolhouse, may be constructed in a more or less substantial and lasting manner, so it is with bridges. If one structure costs less to build than another, it does not necessarily follow that it is also the cheaper and better of the two in the long run for the taxpayers.

Von Babo's criticisms appear to have struck home, for the Scherzer Company did not choose to continue the debate in court. In February 1907, the company quietly withdrew its complaint, and the city proceeded with the construction of the North Halsted Street Bridge, which was completed without further incident in November 1908.[48] The Scherzer Company did not again use the courts to interfere with a municipal bridge letting, but it did continue to submit noncomplying proposals and to criticize the Department of Public Works for rejecting them.[49] The company apparently hoped that its tactics would mobilize Chicago taxpayers to support its cheaper bridges, but public attention focussed instead upon the royalties received by the company for permitting the use of its patented designs. In Chicago, these fees were about $18,000 per bridge. The issue first surfaced during the 1905 North Avenue Bridge dispute, when the local press reported that the "Sanitary District . . . always has stuck to the Scherzer bridge and paid the company a heavy royalty for using them." Shortly afterwards, the district's own chief engineer, Isham Randolph, expressed the opinion that "the royalties asked by that company [i.e., Scherzer], are excessive." In the spring of 1906, after an audit by independent accountants raised questions about the Sanitary District's bridge-building "extravagance," the agency initiated an in-house financial investigation, resulting two years later in its abandonment of patent-bridge designs. As the district's president, Robert R. McCormick, announced in 1908, "Because of controversies and scandals growing out of the use of patented bridges in the past, I am firmly of the opinion that in the future these bridges should be designed by the [district's] bridge department whenever possible." The Scherzer Company, therefore, lost its last remaining

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[48] Contact-pressure deformation remained a serious problem for the Scherzer Company for more than 20 years; see "Track Castings for Rolling-Lift Bridges," *Engineering News-Record* 97 (25 November 1926):878-879. Strauss made good use of the city's critique of the Scherzer Company, routinely sending it out to prospective movable-bridge clients who might be considering a rolling-lift design. He also compiled his own list of Scherzer bridge "failures," which generally involved substructure movement and rolling-track difficulties; see, for example, the Strauss publicity package, c. 1921, in Proposals File, Department of Public Works, City of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Despite the various flaws in the rolling-lift design, the Scherzer Company built over 200 bridges by 1915.

[49] See, for example, "Bridge Engineer Is Assailed," *Chicago Record Herald*, 17 April 1908, 4; "New [Polk Street] Bridge Contract Is Delayed by Bids," *Chicago Record Herald*, 16 April 1908.

customer in Chicago.[50]

Strauss fared slightly better than the Scherzer Company in dealing with the Chicago Department of Public Works. Surviving city records do not indicate whether or not Strauss submitted a proposal for the North Halsted Street Bridge, but in 1907 he was enlisted by Pihlfeldt to prepare a version of his patented bascule design for the Polk Street crossing of the South Branch of the Chicago River. Originally Pihlfeldt had hoped to use the city's fixed-trunnion bascule at this location as well, but to do so he would have had to deprive the Chicago Great Western Railway of existing trackage in order to make room for the bridge's east approach. The railroad company threatened suit, claiming that the city had a feasible alternative in the Strauss bascule design, which required less space and therefore could be constructed without any track relocation. Upon the advice of the city attorney, Pihlfeldt decided to use a Strauss-patent design for the site. Completed in 1910, the Polk Street Bridge project rewarded Strauss with $14,000 in royalties, as well as additional engineering fees. Although this royalty payment was less than the Scherzer company's customary fee, it still attracted a good deal of public censure. No other Strauss-patent bridges were built by the city.[51]

The 1908 North Halsted Street Bridge was the eighth bascule to be built according to the city's fixed-trunnion design.[52] In a sense, its completion marked the end of an era. Although the city still had several center-pier swing spans to replace, the next wave of construction would await the passage of another bond issue in 1911. These later bridges incorporated a number of technological refinements that distinguished them from those built prior to 1910. They tended to have two bascule pony trusses instead of the three trusses with partial overhead bracing that characterized the city's original design. They also incorporated a new type of rack for operating the movable leaf, as well as a new system for supporting the trunnions. And perhaps most notably, they showed a concern for aesthetic detailing that was completely lacking in the North Halsted Street Bridge and its predecessors.[53]

Ericson and his colleagues in the city's bridge division had developed their fixed-trunnion bascule design to keep the Chicago River navigable for the city's commercial and

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[50] "Finds Flaws in Bridges," *Chicago Tribune*, 15 August 1905, pt. 1, 8; Isham Randolph to Robert R. McCormick, 13 December 1905, in *SDC Proceedings*, 20 December 1905, 11089; "Canal Inquiry Is Begun," *Chicago Tribune*, 11 May 1906, 3; *SDC Proceedings*, 23 December 1908, 1409.

[51] "High Bridge Royalty Is Demanded of City," *Chicago Record Herald*, 28 December 1907, 1; " Defends Bridge Bonus," *Chicago Record Herald*, 30 December 1907, 5.

[52] The seven previous bascules were built as follows: Clybourn Place (North Branch), 1902; Ninety-Fifth Street (Calumet River), 1903; East Division Street (North Branch Canal), 1903; West Division Street (North Branch), 1904; North Western Avenue (North Branch), 1904; Archer Avenue (South Branch), 1906; and North Avenue (North Branch). All of the bridges were double-leaf structures, except for the Archer Avenue bascule, which contained a single leaf. In 1909, the city replicated the Archer Avenue design at Kinzie Street, over the North Branch of the River.

[53] Becker, 279-283.

industrial interests. During the first decades of the twentieth century, however, Chicago shipping patterns significantly changed, as the largest carriers increasingly bypassed the Chicago River's entrance on Lake Michigan near the downtown district in order to serve new manufacturing plants located near a deeper harbor at the mouth of the Calumet River in south Chicago. By the mid-1920s, Chicago River shipping tonnage had fallen off to such an extent that the Department of Public Works even suggested the adoption of "a fixed bridge policy" that "could be established beginning 1925, by converting or replacing the 41 existing [movable] bridges, starting in the outlying districts and gradually approaching the river mouth within ten years."[54] If such a policy were to be implemented, the city engineers projected an annual savings of almost $3 million, as movable bridges were much more expensive than fixed bridges to maintain and rebuild. At least partly because of opposition by the Army Corps of Engineers, which held to the belief that the Chicago River should be maintained as a navigable waterway, the city's movable bridges remained in operation.

Chicago's movable bridges proved to be a national asset during World War II, when commercial shipping on the Chicago River markedly increased. But the upsurge in traffic was a wartime anomaly rather than a revitalization. In the post-war period, shipping once again declined, and bridge openings increasingly served the needs of pleasure craft. In 1971, the city administration under Mayor Richard B. Daley once again called for closing many of the river spans, especially on the northern parts of the waterway. As the mayor's office reported, "The bridges are seldom lifted and permanent closing would mean a considerable saving on upkeep of the costly lift machinery . . . . Practically all the river traffic, including barges and tugs, have clearance to pass under the bridges without elevating them."[55] The Corps of Engineers eventually agreed, and by the 1990s, all of the North Branch and North Branch Canal bascules, including the North Halsted Street Bridge, were functioning as fixed highway spans.

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[54] City of Chicago, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, Division of Bridges, "Preliminary Report on Movable Bridges vs. Fixed Bridges," 16 April 1923, 1-2, in Government Documents Division, Harold Washington Municipal Library. The shift in shipping patterns can be traced in the comparative tonnage statistics for the Chicago River and Calumet Harbor that were presented each year by the Department of Public Works in its annual reports.

[55] "Plan to End Operation of 6 Lift Bridges," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 16 November 1971.

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